

**Remarks at a G&P Charitable
Foundation for Cancer Research
Dinner in New York City**
October 12, 1998

The President. Thank you. Well, when I told Denise I would do this for her and the memory of her daughter, I didn't know that an added bonus was I would be introduced by Bill Cosby, a man who—I mean, his net worth was 500 times mine before I met all those lawyers in Washington. *[Laughter]* But I thank you, Bill. I thank you and Camille for your friendship, the letters you sent me, the words of wisdom in the last several months, and for being here tonight.

I want to thank my wonderful friend Denise Rich for so many things but for remembering her daughter in this magnificent and farsighted and humane way. Hillary would like to have been here with me tonight, but she is in Prague on a trip for our country. But we love you, Denise, and we thank you for what you're doing.

I want to thank Les Moonves for his work in making this evening a success. And I want to say I am delighted that you're honoring Milton Berle. Thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you.

You know, when you're President, you can speak off the cuff a little bit, but you have all these wonderful people who work for you, and they dig up interesting facts. Now, here are the facts they dug up for me to say about Milton Berle. *[Laughter]*

[At this point, Mr. Berle stood up and pretended to depart.]

The President. Oh, no, it gets better; sit down. He's been in show business for 85 years. He's performed in drag more than any other entertainer except the roadshow cast of "La Cage Aux Folles." *[Laughter]* And most important, he holds the Guinness Book of World Records for the most charity benefit performances of any entertainer in history. Thank you, Milton Berle.

I'd like to ask you to take just a couple of minutes to seriously consider the purpose for which you have come tonight. Twenty-five years ago America declared war on cancer. Twenty-five years from now I hope we will have won the war. I hope the war on

cancer will have about as much meaning to schoolchildren as the War of 1812. Twenty-five years from now I hope schoolchildren don't even know what the word "chemotherapy" means.

The progress now being made against cancer is stunning. We are closing in on the genetic causes of breast cancer, colon cancer, and prostate cancer; testing medicines actually to prevent these cancers. New tools for screening and diagnosis are returning to many patients the promise of a long and healthy life. From 1991 to 1995 cancer death rates actually dropped for the first time in history.

For the last 6 years, we have worked hard to fight this dreaded disease, helping cancer patients to keep their health coverage when they change jobs, accelerating the approval of cancer drugs while maintaining safe standards, continually every year increasing funding for cancer research.

In the last few weeks, four critical steps have been taken. First of all, in spite of all the fights we've been having in Washington, we did succeed in getting from Congress on a bipartisan basis the largest single increase in funding for cancer and other medical research in history, as part of our gift to the 21st century. Second, I directed the National Cancer Institute to expedite a new computer system to give tens of thousands of cancer patients across our country access to clinical trials on the kinds of new cancer treatments that can save their lives. Third, I have taken steps to ensure that by next year cancer patients and advocates will have a seat at the table when we set the medical research agenda in Government, because those who suffer from cancer know truths about these diseases that even the experts do not understand. And fourth, we've made \$15 million available to study the long-term effects of cancer treatment and how to prevent cancer recurrence.

And I know, Denise, these grants have special significance to you because Gabrielle herself succumbed as a result of the treatment she received from Hodgkin's Disease. So we give these grants with you and your family in mind.

Oh, we've still got a lot to do, all right, in this battle for victory over cancer. We have to convince the next Congress to finish the

unfinished agenda of this one: to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights to ensure cancer patients high-quality care; to help Medicare beneficiaries with cancer be a part of these clinical trials; to convince the next Congress to confirm the first oncologist ever nominated to be head of the FDA, Dr. Jane Henney; and finally, to take strong action to protect our children against America's number one cancer threat, the sales of tobacco products illegally to our children.

But I came here to say to you two things. First of all, our country is moving in the right direction. And with all the partisanship in Washington, this is one area where we have pretty much moved together, hand in hand across party lines.

Secondly, I want you to know that there is so much to be done that in spite of increasing and unprecedented Government efforts, it's not enough. We need the kind of effort that you're making here tonight. You never know how many lives you'll save, how many children you'll give a future to, and it's really worth doing.

Let me just say one final thing. The fight against cancer is really a fight for life, a fight for the elemental proposition that all of us are bound to seek not just for ourselves but for all others, the chance to live out our dreams for as long and as well as we can. And whenever that change is cut short, we are all diminished. I'm thinking about it in another context today because, like so many of you, I was heartbroken this morning to learn that young Matthew Shepard, who was beaten so viciously in Wyoming, succumbed to his injuries.

And I say that to remind you, when we come here tonight you feel good about it, you feel good about yourselves. You're contributing money to help people you'll never know live lives you'll never be a part of. And that is in the best tradition of humanity. You do it because you know in some profound and almost indescribable way we share a common mission in these brief lives we live on Earth. And when someone else takes a life—as this young man was apparently beaten to death and apparently only because he was gay—and that taking is done out of blind hatred and maybe even fear, like cancer it

violates every sense of how we think life ought to be.

So I say to you tonight, when you go home and you ask yourselves what happened tonight—besides the fact that you all look beautiful, and you saw a lot of interesting people, and you had to put up with a speech from the President, and you marveled at Milton Berle, and Bill Cosby made you laugh—you can say, "I stood for life; not my life but someone else's; not someone I know but someone I don't; not someone whose life I will share but someone whose life I hope will be wonderful."

And it is the recognition of how we are all bound together across all the lines that superficially divide us that make this a very great country. When we violate that, we diminish our own lives. When we honor it, we lift our lives. And I thank you for how you have honored it tonight.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Denise Rich, president, G&P Charitable Foundation for Cancer Research; entertainer Bill Cosby and his wife, Camille; and Leslie Moonves, president, CBS Entertainment.

Remarks at a Dessert Honoring Senatorial Candidate Charles Schumer in New York City

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First of all, I want to thank Harvey for his wonderful words and for being a real friend to me and to Hillary and to our causes. And I want to thank Steve and Maureen for having us here tonight in their modest little home. [Laughter] I love this place. [Laughter] And you might be relieved to know that while Chuck Schumer was in here giving his speech to you, I was next door signing the budget bill so the Government won't shut down tomorrow morning. So they have—I was giving the Congress 4 more days to do right.

Let me say, first of all, I just talked to Hillary this morning. She's in Prague tonight, but she would like to be here. And when I tell her about it, she will be sorry that she